

long time. The first bill I introduced calling for a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget, we came close to that amendment being adopted recently. I hope we return to it again. I hope it can be adopted.

I am delighted to know that harmonious relations exist. There is nobody fussing right now about the other pertaining to the recess, as it is being called. But let me say this from the perspective of long-time negotiations of the settlement of lawsuits: You do not do too well with recesses. So my advice, if it is to mean anything, is get back together. You might want to recess a day or 2, or maybe a week at the longest, but recesses allow the re-entrenchment of ideas, and therefore you do not have the give-and-take, you come fortified to maintain your position.

It is a matter of trying to be reasonable in getting together. We are mighty close now. So let us not have too long a recess. Let us get back together. Certainly by the time the President makes his State of the Union Address, we ought to, by that time, have an agreement. That ought to be a goal that we should be striving toward, and making every effort.

We are close, but the differences are still major. But we can reach an agreement and produce a balanced budget for 7 years. I urge all participants in the negotiations to get back together and to work and endeavor to be reasonable and to reach an agreement.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JEFFORDS). The Senator from Alaska.

MR. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

THE WEATHER CONDITIONS IN WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I want to comment very briefly on the matter that has been the subject of some discussion, and that is the weather in Washington, DC. Alaskans operate on the theory that you are hardy because you have to be. I might add, that for reasons unknown, perhaps because of the extended atmospheric conditions or warm air or some might conclude hot air emanating from Washington, DC, in this general area, I think we have attracted something, and it has been snow. Much of that perhaps has moved from my State of Alaska where we have virtually no snow.

Our ski resorts in Anchorage have not opened, and in Fairbanks there is not enough snow to go cross-country skiing or snow machining. So I do not know whether that is a blessing in disguise or not. But Alaskans are somewhat concerned, and I might add somewhat confused. But I do not think Alaskans necessarily are the only ones that have made that observation as a consequence of the last several weeks of discussion here in Washington.

HELPING A DRIVER IN THE SNOW

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I might just add for the benefit of my colleagues a little story that occurred the other day when my wife and I were walking over here on Monday and it was pretty scarce around here. The snow plows had not been active at all on the street that we live on even though it is a street that offers bus service. We are only about 6 or 8 blocks away.

We came over and went through the mail and did a few odd things, as we have been doing each day since. Going back I noticed a car was trying to get up a small hill. It was about a two-block hill. They were not having any luck. The more the driver pressed on the throttle, the more the wheels spun.

I said I would be happy to get his car up to the top of the hill for him. So he got out of the car, and I got in the car and put it in drive, and very slowly eased up the hill. I noticed that there was another hill at the end of the first block. I thought, well, the best thing to do is take it up to the corner. And as I crept up the second block, I noticed the gentleman was shaking and beginning to run after the car.

I stopped at the stop sign when I got to the top of the hill, and he said, "I didn't think you were going to stop. I thought you were going to steal my car."

I said, "No. I didn't want to stop at the first stop sign because we were still on a hill and you would have trouble."

He said, "Well, I'm sure glad that you got my car up the hill." But he said, "I was really concerned you were going to run away with it."

To end the story, he got in the car. I left. He went around the corner and got stuck again. I guess it is a hazard that is associated with so many experiences.

THE BUDGET TALKS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, let me make a reference to the state of affairs relative to the suspended budget talks. I think it is fair to say that we have all observed, with some chagrin, finger pointing, the reality that after these endless meetings we are left with a situation where we have not reached an accord. It is undoubtedly a reality that we will not get this thing resolved until after the State of the Union on the 23d of January. It would be perhaps speculative to suggest we will get it resolved at that time. But we certainly hope so.

But I think it is fair to say that the extended discussions covering the major issues of Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, taxes have been thoroughly gone into, but they are still not resolved. The President has stepped forward with a 7-year proposal to balance the budget, but the difficulty with that is most of the cuts are in the 7th year.

In the 7th year the President is not going to be here. It is such a draconian mandate that undoubtedly Congress

would find it unacceptable. Clearly it lacks the commitment that is necessary for it to be workable; and that is that we have a proportional cut over each year that is equitable and palatable to the American public. Further, Mr. President, we have not gone into the second-tier issues.

These are issues that are subject to considerable debate, but they are in the reconciliation, and the reconciliation process as we know it is hung up as a consequence of the continued discussion over Medicaid, Medicare, welfare, taxes, and so forth.

As a consequence, we have an emergency not just associated with weather, but in my State concerning resource development on public lands. As an example, we have unresolved the issue of opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Area for oil exploration. That is covered in the reconciliation package. We have a mining piece of legislation, a mining bill in the reconciliation package that will either determine the future of domestic mining or the demise of mining in the United States as we find ourselves in a situation where the industry is no longer able to generate a reasonable return on domestic investments and moves overseas.

So there is much riding on a resolve, and we also have unresolved major appropriations bills affecting my State and the timber industry in the Tongass and the Interior appropriations bill. So it is imperative that judgments be made and that those judgments be made in a timely manner.

As a consequence, Mr. President, I would just like to refer to what I think is the significance of what this debate is all about. It has been suggested that the debate concerns itself with a balanced budget. I think it is more fundamental. I think it is a historic debate about the role and the scope of Washington, DC, whether Washington will continue to tax Americans more, to spend more of America's savings, to regulate Americans more, and to control Americans more, or whether we are going to see a departure that will begin to reduce the size, scope, and power of Washington, DC. I think that is what this debate is all about. I think that is what we should focus in on. We are at a significant crossroads, Mr. President, and it is appropriate that we recognize it for what it is. It is either doing business as usual or a substantial departure from the status quo.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to have printed in the RECORD a letter from Kelly R. King. Kelly King is a college student from Alaska. He was formerly an intern in my office. He has written this letter to each Member of the U.S. Senate who chose not to support opening the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve for exploration and, if the oil is there, production. I think it is appropriate that we reflect on the attitudes prevailing concerning whether or not we are going to continue to develop our natural resources in the United States, whether it be on public land for